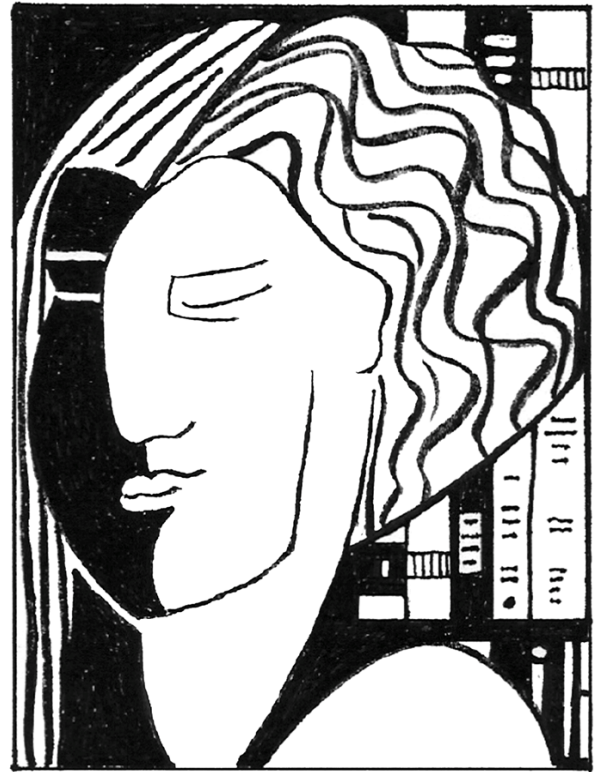


# Women and Gender Studies

- WAGS becomes GSFS
- WAGS 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Celebration
- Gensler Symposium – Body Parts
- The Fraker Prize
- IHH goes to Washington
- Elect Her
- Alumnae News
- Faculty Spotlights

Spring 2013



*From Program Director Sujata Moorti*

The program is going through a name change. As of Fall 2013, we will be the **Program in Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies**. This change has been a while in the making and comes after two years of work. Faculty affiliated with the program have been assessing our curriculum, comparing it with those of our peers and also with the current state of the field. Based on this work, we have changed the requirements for the major so our students will be well-versed in transnational issues, critical race and critical sexuality studies. Our hope is that soon we can incorporate science in the core curriculum. The new name allows us to do what we have always done -- study women and women's issues as well as gay/lesbian studies -- and it allows us to deepen our program in queer and critical race studies. The name also allows us to openly and proudly embrace feminism. Most students have loved this new name. Of course, we are still trying to come up with an acronym that rolls off the tongue.

As I returned to directing the program after a three-year hiatus, the name change was the first official task on my agenda. This has been possible due to the leadership and groundwork laid by Ellen Oxfeld and Cheryl Faraone during their tenures as program directors. My main tasks for the year were to then focus on organizing celebratory parties to mark the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the academic program and the 20<sup>th</sup> year of Chellis House, which we describe in greater detail in the pages that follow. I also worked with Laurie Essig and Kristin Bright as well as a number of students to organize this year's Gensler Symposium on Body Parts. In the pages that follow we have tried to capture some of the number of events we have hosted. I want to single out the student-led It Happens Here campaign, which captures best the spirit of feminisms past and feminisms in the future. It has been an intellectually stimulating year, sometimes physically and emotionally exhausting, but never boring.

## *Finally Legal - WAGS Turns 21!*

Caroline Kahlenberg '14, Jackie Park '15 and Allie Weinstein '13.5

On December 10, 2013, over 60 faculty, staff, alumni and current students gathered in Atwater Dining Hall to celebrate the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the program in Women's and Gender Studies (WAGS) and the 20<sup>th</sup> year of the May Belle Chellis Women's Resource Center.

The celebration felt uniquely WAGS-y: rather than selecting just one or two faculty members to speak about the history of the program, we all passed around the microphone over dinner—students, staff, and faculty alike—recalling our experiences being part of the intimate program, both joyful and challenging.

First, we heard Sociology Professor Peggy Nelson share her initial attempts to start the Women's Studies major along with a few colleagues in the late 1980s—efforts that were not always welcomed by the College with open arms. Yet, she and her colleagues turned any resistance around to gain momentum: "I think there was something about being oppositional that may have incited a certain kind of enthusiasm," she fondly remembered.

Later, Professor Kevin Moss recalled his early experiences teaching "Intro to Gay and Lesbian Studies" at Middlebury in the early 1990's. He noted the shift of the program from a women-centric one to one that encompassed a broader array of gender issues. Moss commented on the program's evolution, "[WAGS is] not just women. Sure, we cover women, but that's half of it...we also cover gay men, trans issues, and gender." Throughout the evening, we continued to hear from faculty who reflected upon the inclusivity of the program, a program that continues to respond to the wants and needs of students on campus.

Nearly every person who spoke—whether about horrific fraternity practices or the friendships formed through the Faculty Women's Studies Reading Group—cited the community—or truly, the *family*—of faculty, staff, and students that allowed WAGS to survive and even thrive. We heard the sentiment, "I didn't do it alone—and I'd never dreamed of doing it alone" from faculty and staff members throughout the evening. The

warmth of friendship in the room was tangible. From this camaraderie, we could easily see how the program endured despite all-too-familiar financial and curricular challenges.

As WAGS students, hearing such stories about the program's embattled history and remarkable endurance allowed us to better appreciate the influence of WAGS across academic disciplines. Perhaps we take it for granted that today, our history, philosophy, and biology professors allow us to write papers with a *gendered approach* in their fields. The speakers of the evening reminded us that this willingness is a new phenomenon. As Professor Marjorie Lamberti mentioned at the celebration, this "heightened consciousness" among the Middlebury faculty as the WAGS program took hold allowed gender as a category of analysis to shift from a marginalized position to a more accepted one.

Even if, as Professor Nelson said, it is not necessarily *better* but *different* being a woman on campus now versus twenty years ago, there are undoubtedly more spaces to discuss gender issues on campus. Recognizing that the persistence of the WAGS program's members ultimately granted us these spaces we can call home—from Chellis House to the Queer Studies House—has certainly given us incentive to preserve this history while continuing to forge ahead.

Of course, we would be remiss to reflect on the celebration only as a celebration of past achievements, as WAGS continues to carry a stigma in some academic fields and certainly among Middlebury students as well. We continue to hear people stereotype and undermine the legitimacy of WAGS and Chellis House, and we cannot ignore such comments. The celebration served as a reminder that we cannot take the WAGS program for granted, but rather must view it as something to continuously improve. The celebration in December—or really, the *family gathering*—gives us confidence as we usher in the new age of WAGS adulthood. With such a deeply rooted and nurtured upbringing, we have no doubt that the program, along with Chellis House, will continue to develop and thrive in the next two decades.



Attendees at the WAGS 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Celebration included (clockwise from bottom left) Tracey Merrill '92, Paula Schwartz, Jan Albers, Greg Buckles, Joann Brewer, Allie Weinstein '14, Jackie Park '15, Alex Strott '15, Marjorie Lamberti, Stan Bates, Virginia Bates, Peggy Nelson, Tiffany Sargent, Timi Maver, Suiata Moorti





## *The 'Macho' Bracero?: A Study of Masculinity and Mexican Immigration from 1942-1964" and "Orangegasm": The 2013 Alison Fraker Prize*

The Alison Fraker Prize is awarded each year to a student who writes the best essay that addresses gender, sexuality and/or women in an interesting manner. This year the nominees were:

- Maria Benjamin. Her essay "Out from under the Ulama: Progress in Female Education in Saudi Arabia from 1960 to Today" was nominated by Professor Febe Armanios.
- Ashlee Bird. "Justice." Her poem was nominated by Professor David Bain.
- Caily Cron. "Panic." Her creative project was nominated by Professor Laurie Essig.
- Caroline Kahlenberg. "The 'Macho' Bracero?: A Study of Masculinity and Mexican Immigration from 1942-1964." Professor Darien Davis nominated this essay.
- India Kerz. Orangegasm. Her creative writing project was nominated by Professor Catharine Wright.
- Elori Kramer. "Everybody Loves You." Her film was nominated by Professor Daniel Houghton.
- Syd Schulz. "Media Representations of Lolita Lebron: Terrorist or Femme Fatale?" was also nominated by Professor Darien Davis.
- Chloe Wilwerding. "Bernward's Doors and the Bayez Embroidery: The Sexualization and Marginalization of Medieval Women," was nominated by Professor Eliza Garrison.

The projects varied from a poetry narrative, to a film, to a material culture reproduction, to a formal essay and everything else in between. Each of these projects were enriching and challenging. They were all terrific and made the lives of the reviewers quite difficult. We give a big thank you to Juana Gamero De Coca, Antonia Losano, Amy Morsman, Catharine Wright and Cheryl Faraone who graciously gave of their time to review these submissions.

The recipient of this year's Fraker Prize was Carolyn Kahlenberg '14 for her essay "The 'Macho' Bracero?: A Study of Masculinity and Mexican Immigration from 1942-1964." An honorable mention was given to India Kerz for her project "Orangegasm."

**Excerpt from** "The 'Macho' Bracero?: A Study of Masculinity and Mexican Immigration from 1942-1964" by Carolyn Kahlenberg:

The "bracero program," which brought male Mexican migrant workers to U.S. fields through a series of diplomatic binational agreements from 1942-1964, has been a source of great historical debate. For the twenty-two years of the program, each country had its own investment: For the United States, it supplied much-needed labor to agricultural growers, primarily in the American southwest.

For Mexico, the program aimed to boost its struggling economy by providing male citizens with work and farm skills to eventually be brought home to apply their new knowledge in Mexico. By limiting the program to men, the Mexican government tried to ensure that the migration was only temporary, because men would eventually return to their families in Mexico.

Despite each government's interest in the diplomatic agreement, however, the bracero program was not universally applauded. From its initial founding, the program sparked controversy and discussions about its treatment of braceros that persist today. Typically, historians have characterized the program as invasive, oppressive, and degrading to Mexican migrants ... More recently, ... some scholars have contested this narrative of Mexicans as passive victims, arguing instead that braceros should be understood as actors with their own agency and motivations for migration. Deborah Cohen and Michael Snodgrass, in particular, use their own oral histories with former braceros to argue that many Mexicans actively asserted their masculinity and modernity through the bracero program. They claim that Mexican men, many of whom could not find work in their own country, had a specifically *gendered* reason for migration: to fulfill the masculine duties expected of them as breadwinners and providers in their families.



Carolyn Kahlenberg



Ultimately, deconstructing the language used in contemporary media representations of the bracero program exposes significant historical evidence of broader national attitudes about masculinity. From the very first *Washington Post* article, which spoke of braceros “lodging in barns with animals” and “sleeping in the city parks,” we should recognize that specific word choices can be very revealing. The article’s conclusion that “the tragedy of destitute farmers ...[who] have to find work across the border is the story also of the United States’ biggest immigrant problem” links emasculated Mexicans with this “national problem” in one seemingly objective statement. In reality, it contains a much larger assertion and implication of the situation. It is for this reason—that all language carries deliberate, and often gendered, meaning—that the motivations and consequences of links such as this cannot go unexamined.



As noted in this essay, braceros often found themselves contractually forbidden from striking and unable to negotiate wages with their bosses, at least for the first two decades of the program. By the early 1960s, however, some Mexican farm workers encouraged by the emerging civil rights movement began to mobilize to improve their conditions and call to end the program. Led by Cesar Chavez, a young Chicano who founded the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) in California in 1962, these organized forces called upon their allies in other unions, churches, and community groups affiliated with the civil rights movement. Even after they witnessed the bracero program’s end in 1964, Chavez and his colleagues continued to fight for farm workers’ rights, focusing most of their efforts on increasing wages and forcing growers to recognize legal working standards. To effect such change, the NFWA, which later became the United Farm Workers (UFW), took up non-violent practices such as boycotts, pickets, and strikes. By the end of the decade, Chavez and the UFW had largely succeeded in pressuring growers to accept union contracts, obtaining major gains such as health clinics, union-run hiring halls, community centers, and cooperative gas stations for farm laborers—in addition to higher wages. Significantly, these movements were highly gendered. As historian

Andrea Shan Johnson argues, Chavez and other union leaders framed the farm labor movement as congruent with *machismo* ideal, despite its seemingly feminine non-violent emphasis. In other words, Chavez—understanding that *machismo* was crucial to the identity and motivations of many Mexican-American farm workers—realized the movement “would have to sell themselves as a group that allowed men to be even manlier. They would have to sell themselves as the ultimate supporters of *machismo*.”

**Excerpt from “Orangegasm” by India Kerz:**

... So she proceeded to recount a different story, one I had heard many times of her childhood spent in India that went something like this: “One day, when I was around eight, my mother decided to take me for a walk. The streets we were weaving through were unfamiliar to me. This was not the Bombay I knew. I could normally only see the legs and hips of the adults who passed me as I walked down the streets, but on that day I saw a face at my level. There was a woman crouched on the sidewalk, staring at me with two deep hollow eyes. She clutched a baby in her arms that was the shape of a disproportional cookie that had been bitten from all sides. Its gender was unidentifiable. The child’s limbs were broken, and it was missing fingers. Its



India (right) with Catharine Wright

eyes were cloudy as if all it could see was the milkiness of its own sclera. My mom took my hand, knelt down, and explained to me that in India, maiming children was a common way for women to attract attention and money to support themselves. That was my first bout with the reality of the poverty that surrounded me. Before that day, my parents had masterfully shielded me from suffering, promenading only on wealthy streets and enveloping me in luscious silk sarees. It was on that day that I decided that once I left India, I would never go back. It was also on that day that I determined I would never resort to violence to get attention. I would resort to my breasts.”

## Faculty Accomplishments

**Tara Affolter** (Education Studies) has written a chapter for a book that was released in March: James, Judith M. and Nancy Peterson, eds. *White Women Getting Real About Race*, "Piano Lessons: A White Teacher Struggles to Share the Spotlight." Stylus, 2013.

**Rebecca Bennett** (History) has had a book and an article published, *Fighting for the Soul of Germany: The Catholic Struggle for Inclusion after Unification* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012) and "Outsider versus Outsider: Anti-Semitism in the Catholic Popular Press during the *Kulturkampf*," in Michael Nagel and Moshe Zimmermann, eds., *Judenfeindschaft und Antisemitismus in der deutschen Presse über fünf Jahrhunderte: Erscheinungsformen, Rezeption, Debatte und Gegenwehr*, Vol. 1 (Bremen: edition lumière): 241-252, 2013.

**Erick Gong** (Economics) and Kelly Jones from the International Food Policy Institute received funding from IFPRI and the Hewlett Dissertation Fellowships program alumni for a two-year research project in Kenya titled "Can Savings Accounts Save Lives? Financial products for improving sexual and reproductive health."

**Brett Millier** (English and American Literatures) is the recipient of a Fulbright Grant for her leave in 2013-14, which will take her to Yaounde, Cameroon for the academic year. She will have a visiting appointment in the

English Department graduate program at the University of Yaounde.

**Kevin Moss** participated in the 3rd European Conference on Politics and Gender in Barcelona in March and is an alternate for an IREX research grant for next year.

**Steve Snyder** (Japanese Studies) published a translation of Yoko Ogawa's collection of short stories entitled *Revenge* (tr. Stephen Snyder, New York: Picador 2013, 162pp).

**Rebecca Tiger's** (Sociology and Anthropology) book *Judging Addicts: Drug Courts and Coercion in the Justice System* was recently published with NYU Press. She also recently received a Whiting Foundation Fellowship to pursue a project "Public Sociology, Digital Media and Social Change."

**Nina Wieda** (Russian) had an article published in December in a collection titled, "Cultural Kenosis in Chekhov's *The Wife*," in *Chekhov in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Slavica: Bloomington, IN, 2012.

**Matty Woodruff** (Philosophy) has received two research grants for this summer. One for participation in the Institute for the History of Philosophy at Emory University. The second to take part in conferences in Berlin and Freiburg and then to continue as a faculty advisor of the German-language Philosophy Reading Group in the German Summer School on campus.

## J-Term Workshop on Feminist Pedagogy

With the program name change and the changes to our major, we decided to host a pedagogy workshop this January to assess precisely what we do and don't do in our classes. Between 12 and 14 faculty met regularly over the course of the month so we could think through curricular innovations and how our individual courses fit in with the larger curricular changes. For most of us, this was the first time we were discussing feminist pedagogy in a sustained manner. In essence, we examined our individual courses, putting up our syllabus for public scrutiny, discussing our assignments, the in-class activities, what works best and what doesn't. The shared conversations helped us think through new teaching strategies such as the use of twitter in the classroom. We gained from each other's collective experiences with teaching works by Judith Butler, for example. We shared a number of ideas about the theories we explore in our individual courses and those that are not addressed thoroughly. This exercise was exhilarating. It allowed us to assess how each of the individual courses worked in the context of the major. We had a few follow-up meetings over the spring semester to continue to assess how modifications to our courses were proceeding. Our plan is to continue to meet in the fall and hold another workshop in January 2014, this time with colleagues who may be considering cross-listing their courses.

## *It Happens Here Goes to Washington*

Started in 2011 by students Luke Carroll Brown '14 and Margo Cramer '12, *It Happens Here* is an organization that aims to increase conversation about sexual violence at Middlebury. The group has developed a website where students can anonymously submit stories about their own experiences with sexual assault. Both this year and last, IHH held an event in which students volunteered to read either their own stories or those of others. On April 22, 2013, more than a quarter of our campus came to McCullough to listen to and to learn from survivors and their experiences.

This year, *It Happens Here* also implemented the Map Project. The project documented anonymously submitted locations where students had experienced sexual assault at Middlebury. And if there was one lesson from this map, it was that sexual violations occur everywhere at Middlebury. With the exclusion of one residential building, every dormitory on campus was covered by at least one dot. And with more than 100 red dots spread out across the Middlebury campus, the fact that sexual violence has affected so many of us was made visually clear.

Through showing the pervasiveness of sexual assault at Middlebury and through sharing students' stories, the group behind *It Happens Here* wants to end the silence surrounding sexual violence. They hope to show the real effects this violence can have on students. However, instead of doing this through

statistics and facts, the group aims to show the human impact of sexual assault.

Even the White House is aware of the group's efforts. In fall of 2013, Luke interned in the Office of Cabinet Affairs at White House. After the election, he attended a meeting led by Associate Director of the Office of Public Engagement Ronnie Cho, who discussed the problem of sexual violence on college campuses with Luke. Mr. Cho was incredibly supportive of the work IHH does at Middlebury and offered to help expand *It Happens Here* beyond this college alone.



left to right: Karin Hanta, Caitlin Waters, Sujata Moorti, Luke Brown, Kristina Johansson, Addie Cunniff and Emily Pedowitz in front of the White House

In late February, Mr. Cho invited Luke and fellow students Emily Pedowitz, Caitlin Waters, Kristina Johansson, and Addie Cunniff as well as Professor of Women and Gender Studies Sujata Moorti and Chellis House Director Karin Hanta to participate in a town hall-style brainstorming session to put an end to teen dating violence. The President's Office and the

Office of the Dean of the College provided the funds for the group to attend the

meeting on February 28. Just a few minutes before the group walked into the Executive Building of the White House, the Violence against Women Act was reauthorized, a happy prelude to the event. Lynn Rosenthal, the President's Advisor on Violence Against Women, made some introductory remarks. Audience members included college and high school students, representatives of different NGOs, as well as parents of girls who had been killed by their boy-

*Continued on page 11*



## Gensler Symposium – Body Parts

The 2013 Gensler Symposium – Body Parts, was originally conceptualized as a two-day event. But as our majors, minors, and various student group leaders started to participate in event planning it became clear that the different ideas we wanted to explore could not be contained within two days. Thus, was born a week-long series of activities with student leadership shaping most of the events and the publicity. Fittingly, we started the event with student voices and the local.

Eager to have a frank and wide-ranging discussion about our bodies and our selves on campus, students helped organize a two-hour long discussion at Crossroads Café, *Lips & Hips*, on Monday, April 8. Between 60 and 80 students floated in and out of the conversation that covered a range of topics, such as hair types, which body parts are associated with femininity, which ones with race. Embedded in the personal, students voiced the poignant and evocative ways in which they experience their bodies on campus, how they are defined and who defines them.

Days before the *Lips & Hips* conversation, some of the organizers filmed students on campus speaking about their favorite body parts; the resulting video captured the humorous and multifaceted ways in which each of us inhabits our bodies in this corner of Vermont. This visual diary set the tone for the events.

Student discussion also shaped screenings of films on two consecutive days. On Tuesday, April 9, we screened *The Fat Body (In)visible*, a 24-minute documentary on fat activists and fat activism. The resulting conversation focused on the healthy body, the cult of thinness as well as the role of arts in activism. *American Eunuchs* was the film we screened on Wednesday, April 10. This documentary traces the lives of three men who undergo voluntary castration. This film evoked a discussion of how these men's understandings of masculinity and their male identity is not associated with their genitalia.

Thursday, April 11 was a busy day with a feminist theologian exploring how we can move out of a binarized understanding of the human body. Michelle Voss Roberts from Wake Forest Divinity School, turned to medieval female saints in India and Germany to explore we can conceptualize our bodies differently. Two alums, Ofelia Barrios, '93, and Morgane Richardson, '08, led a packed hall to talk about how

race and gender intersect in our understanding of our bodies. Speaking about her work as a HIV/AIDS educator in New York City, Barrios helped students think about sex, safe sex and sex education in a lively, interactive discussion. Drawing on her experience as a digital media activist, Richardson offered students a primer on digital activism.

On Friday, five feminist scholars presented their work on "body parts." The first session centered on "Breasted Bodies" and featured two speakers who approached the issue of breasts from a feminist cultural studies perspective. In her presentation "Something Out of Kilter: Black Women's Breasts, the Missing Link, and Black Feminist Resistance," E. Frances White (New York University) situated the breast in a long history of Empire and racial hierarchies that marked African women's breasts as sites of both prurient fascination and signs of degeneracy in the work of Charles Darwin and his contemporaries. Dr. White disrupted this Darwinian discourse on African women's breasts with contemporary South African feminist artworks on bodies with breasts, particularly the work of photographer Zanele Muholi.

Bernadette Wegenstein (Johns Hopkins University) then presented her research on the history of breast cancer treatments in the United States and how these treatments have evolved into our current notion of "The Cure." Wegenstein also debuted some of her new documentary film on "The Cure" with scenes of the pink ribbons, the breast reconstruction, the changing notions of what it means to experience breast cancer, and the hope and despair of women with breast cancer. Her presentation explored the global and historical dimensions of mastectomies.

Peggy McCracken (University of Michigan) opened the second session, "Genome, Genitalia, and Gender," with a talk on "The Wild Man's Penis: Gendered Anatomy and Becoming Human." McCracken unpacked a fourteenth-century French text, *Tristan de Nanteuil*, about a boy raised by a stag. McCracken was able to use the tale to discuss certain body parts, like the wild man's penis or a mermaid's breast, as meta-signifiers and also floating signifiers since they did not necessarily stay attached to the same bodies.

*Continued on page 9*





Morgane Richardson '08 (fourth from right)  
with members of Women of Color



Darla Thompson (Middlebury College) presented her research on iron collars in Louisiana in her talk "Technologies of the Body: Iron Collar, Chain Gangs, and Enslaved Black Women in Antebellum Louisiana." The physicality of iron collars makes clear the embodied and highly gendered nature of slavery. The iron collars also served in the symbolic realm, signifying both the threat and promise of the utter abjection of certain black bodies.

In her talk "Global Citizenship? Genomes, Nations, and the Politics of Belonging," Banu Subramaniam (University of Massachusetts Amherst) traced the human genome project and the search for genetic history as not "objective science" but rather a project deeply entwined with racial and gender hierarchies. Subramaniam's presentations pointed out how dalits in India as well as Hindu fundamentalists have turned to DNA maps to make very different claims on who is an Indian. DNA and genes are the place where existing power relations are reenacted, including those of gender and race.



Alumna Ofelia Barrios '93



Banu Subramaniam and Bernadette  
Wegenstein take questions



E. Frances White addresses students



Peggy McCracken speaking on April 12

## *Chellis House Hosts Elect Her – Campus Women Win Training*



from right: Rana Abdelhamid, Jessica Grounds (workshop leader) and Mandy Kwan

As one of the 30 campus sites across the United States and Jamaica, Middlebury College received a grant last fall to host Elect Her – Campus Women Win. The event was held on March 9, 2013. Elect Her is the only nationwide program that trains college women on how to run for and win student government elections. The program aims to increase the number of female students running for SGA positions.

The American Association of University Women, since 1881 one of the nation's leading voices promoting education and equity for women and girls, and Running Start, a nonprofit organization that brings young women to politics, have worked together to encourage college women to run

for student government since 2008. "We're training women to bridge the gender leadership gap by starting early," said AAUW Executive Director Linda D. Hallman, CAE.

"There was never another young woman running against me. In fact, of the three women currently serving in the Student Government Association (SGA), I am the only one who ran opposed. There hasn't been a female SGA President in 10 years," said sophomore Rana Abdelhamid, who together with Karin Hanta, director of Chellis House, the college's women's resource center, initially applied for the grant.

Together with their fellow organizers, sophomores Alex Strott and Mandy Kwan, Rana Abdelhamid and Karin Hanta succeeded in bringing Kesha Ram, Vermont's youngest legislator, and Alex MacLean, Governor Shumlin's former campaign manager and deputy chief of staff as guest speakers to the College. Representative Ram told the audience that she had been encouraged to run for office by former Governor Madeleine Kunin after she had won the SGA presidency at the University of Vermont. The student vote and a platform based on environmental issues helped her win her district. Alex MacLean stressed that candidates had to come across as authentic. That's why they should

concentrate on issues that motivated them to run in the first place so their message sounds



Workshop attendees Marjeela Basij-Rasikh, Kesha Ram, Elyse Barnard and Mandy Kwan

genuine, even if they have to repeat it ad nauseam. She also highlighted the importance of assembling a "kitchen cabinet," a group of trusted advisors who will tell candidates their honest opinion. Jessica Grounds, executive director of Running Start, led the workshop. The 50 college women in attendance benefited greatly from the wealth of knowledge these three young experts brought to the table. Exercises included drafting an "elevator speech" to get their core message out in three or four sentences. The group brainstormed about the importance of networks and workshop participants realized that networks of powerful women were presently assembled. "Women play a pivotal role on campus. The event introduced me to a lot of people I normally may not have had the opportunity to meet and interact with," said Mariam Khan '16, who decided to take on a leadership

position in the Religious Life Council in 2013/14.

And the workshop did have the attendees running, as it were. In a mock election, the college women had to get as many votes as possible within 30 minutes. As they rushed all over campus, they received signatures from their colleagues. In the end, first-year student Laura Nubler received 75 endorsements from other students and a scholarship to attend the AAUW-sponsored National Conference for College Women Student Leaders to be held in

Washington, D.C. May 31–June 2, 2013. Students drew great encouragement from the event. "The workshop gave me a segue to ponder the dire need for continuing the torch of female leadership, as the world really cannot function without the participation of half of its inhabitants," said Naina Qayyum '15. "I hope that the ElectHer message can be implemented in my native Pakistan to give potential female candidates the skills to lead confidently and tangibly." Rachel Liddell '15, currently the Cook

Commons Senator, felt so inspired that she decided to run for the SGA President. On May 1, she won by a landslide. "I think we like to pretend we're above sexism in the glass ceiling, but we're not. ElectHer showed me that so many people had asked me to run for President, and I had continued to refuse. Why was I refusing? Clearly people saw something in me. Why couldn't I see it. I just needed to decide to understand my own qualifications and give myself credit."

### **Wanderlust** – a poem by Melian Radu from her collection *Art Damaged*

*At a reception given by the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, artist Olle Carlström pressed a plate of potato salad onto the swastika featured in Dick Bengtsson's 1971 painting of the Kumla prison auditorium and its constructivist tapestry.*

*Another person who witnessed the incident said that one can punch a fellow artist in the face, but to damage their work is unforgivable: "That kind of thing deserves the death penalty!"*

Potato salad is for men whose guts are lined with verve, given only to those beginning great quests. One man carried his bowlful on his back in a refrigerator up the Baintha Brakk, and so was saved from the native ogres who pine lustily for the antebellum east. A boy who'd lived exactly five thousand days spooned, on the nose of the five thousand and first, a marriageable portion sure to loose him from the shin splints of puberty. The anesthetist foolish enough to eat his helping instead of its earthenware mug was turned instantly into a swan with two-toned wings—filling his patient with dreams of soldiers searching Chicago lofts for any signs of Eurydice's toenail clippers. Yesterday, a painter named his a brush: the potatoes, no root to object, egged on their cohorts and made purple work with vinegar. Whoever heard of a Nazi digesting potato salad anyway? Their prisons are lined with tapestries of casseroles. Even a swastika must eat.

### *IHH continued from page 7*

friends. The audience engaged in various exercises with members of Men Can Stop Rape and with a group of male high school students from Newton, Mass., who have made violence prevention a mainstay of their school curriculum. The highlight of the day was a surprise appearance by Vice President Joe Biden, an initiator and staunch supporter of the Violence Against Women Act. He did not mince words about men who act violently against women, "In my view, they are just cowards." After the event, the group also visited Rep. Peter Welch's office, whose staff member assured the group of the congressman's support for It Happens Here. For the group, the Washington trip was both uplifting and humbling, a testament to the fact that the White House is not engaged in a game of optics, but instead, wants to make clear that the President and his staff understand teen violence is a problem.



## Where Does a WAGS Degree Get You?

We recently checked in with four WAGS alumnae, Stephanie Poplika '05, Lauren Curatolo '06, Zohra Safi '09, Christine Bachman-Sanders '09 and Jamie Mittleman '10, who are doing very well for themselves. Find out what they are up to now.

### Stephanie Poplika '05:



Stephanie holding a baby that she helped birth in Atiak, Uganda.

As a doula (professional labor support), for the past four years, I have assisted hundreds of women through their pregnancies, births, and postpartum period. I have helped them breathe and find comfort during labor; I have caught babies as they slide into the world; I have guided them to latch onto the breast for the first time and watched the tears of a new father and the triumph of a new mother. I find this deeply satisfying work. However, I was consistently reminded of the need for research that attends to the complexities of birth. This past summer I traveled to northern Uganda and started apprenticing as a student midwife in a rural birth clinic. My

extensive practical experience uniquely situates me to contribute new ethnographic analyses of training, knowledge, power, and resistance in childbirth, both in the West and cross-culturally. My academic interests lie at the intersections of social and medical anthropology, feminist studies, and the politics of reproduction. Recently, I applied to PhD programs in cultural anthropology so that I can further anthropological knowledge and produce tangible solutions for improving maternal and child healthcare outcomes. I hope to become a trained midwife while completing a doctorate and blend both theoretical explorations and practical applications.

### Lauren Curatolo '06:



The photo above shows Lauren (right) on New York's Times Square billboard. She was recently invited to help ring the bell at the NASDAQ to help raise awareness about human trafficking in

the United States. A pro bono project called VS, dedicated to ending human trafficking, was featured that day. Lauren graduated from CUNY School of Law in 2012, and passed the July 2012 New York Bar Examination. At CUNY, she was part of the International Women's Human Rights Clinic, and worked on two projects as part of her clinical work. She worked with The Legal Aid Society's Trafficking Victims Legal Defense and Advocacy Project (TVLDAP) and then did a fact-finding mission in Haiti on the pervasive issues of sexual assault, sexual exploitation, and violence against LGBTQ persons post-earthquake. She is currently volunteering for TVLDAP. In addition to her position there, she is working in the Brooklyn and Bronx Housing Courts, providing legal services to fulfill the immense unmet legal needs of low-income New Yorkers. She also works with Women's Link Worldwide as a fellowship attorney, researching, editing, and summarizing cases as needed for the Gender Justice Uncovered Awards, a program designed to highlight written decisions or statements made by judges, administrative bodies, defense attorneys, prosecutors, UN Committees, asylum boards, or anyone else acting within a legal context. Her passion is working with survivors of human traffick-



ing who are being criminalized every single day for engaging in behavior in which they did not freely choose to be involved. She is working on building a career that will allow her to work with indigent clients who desperately need their voices heard and represented in the legal system, and she will continue to take the steps necessary to make sure that she will be a voice for those who have been silenced, marginalized and/or forgotten.

#### **Zohra Safi '09:**

I am currently doing community work in Toronto helping immigrants and newcomers. I am also serving on the board of the



Toronto-based Afghan Women Organization (AWO). I greatly enjoy the work that I do especially with immigrant women and youth who come from varied backgrounds trying very hard, despite a myriad of barriers, to thrive in a new environment. While doing community advocacy, I have realized how important it is to have, at least, some basic knowledge of gender related issues in order to design and implement programs that will serve a purpose and have a positive impact on the targeted group. I remember learning about the relation-

ship between patriarchy, class, and race in my Foundations in Women and Gender Studies course with Professor Moorti, and now I am seeing firsthand how the inequalities immigrant women experience in their home countries manifest themselves in different forms in their adopted country. Being equipped with the right knowledge gives me an edge when dealing with different groups of people.

#### **Christine Bachman-Sanders '09**

For the first time since graduating from Middlebury in 2009, I am back in the classroom, and loving it! This



past fall, I began a Master's program in Media, Culture and Communication at New York University. The faculty and students that surround me come from a wide variety of departments, emphasizing the importance of an interdisciplinary focus. In the first weeks of the program, I found myself desperately learning a new theoretical language in order to communicate with my colleagues and professors. This two-year program has me already thinking seriously about what comes next. In the fall, I'll begin my thesis and apply for PhD programs—now that I've had a taste of academic life again, I am certain that it is

where I belong. Just today, I thought back on my time at Middlebury while writing my senior thesis, as I re-watched the 1927 film *Metropolis*. The film made a cameo appearance in the conclusion of my senior thesis as I theorized about cyborg feminism. Today, I fantasize about turning that into the foundation of a master's thesis. But I have a few months and a summer of bicycling across the country before I launch into that project... Until then, I will happily indulge in the joys of academic exploration—and plenty of cyborg-themed films.

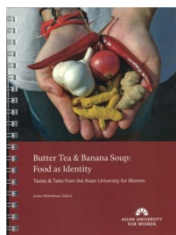
#### **Jamie Mittleman '10**

After graduating from Middlebury, Jamie Mittleman '10 started a Sister-



to-Sister Program at the Asian University for Women in Bangladesh, where she worked as a grammar teacher. Upon her arrival, she immediately detected a need for a mentoring program, in which more advanced students connect with younger students. One way that the female students connected was through food. Since they all hailed from different countries, some of which had recently experienced ethnic warfare, the students shared their cultural traditions by

preparing healthy meals in the “Eating Better Food Committee.” Jamie thought of an innovative way to capture the energy of this intimate and ultimately peace-building activity. She proposed the publication of a cookbook to which students submitted a recipe and a story. Jamie produced a beautiful book entitled *Butter Tea & Banana Soup: Food as Identity*, which aims to empower these students by giving value to their experiences. The book also made it onto the desk *New York Times* journalist Nick Kristof and was reviewed on his *Half The Sky* blog.



### Faculty Spotlights

By Alex Strott

Assistant Professor of Religion Harshita Mruthinti Kamath joined Middlebury College this January after receiving her PhD from Emory University and studying in India for ten months on a Fulbright scholarship. She previously earned her master's degree from Harvard Divinity School and her undergraduate degree from Emory. Her research is greatly inspired by her years of training in Kuchipudi, a classical Indian dance style originating in South India and traditionally performed by men personifying women. Through her research, Professor Kamath hopes to explore this “phenomenon of female impersonation” and to compare it to Western drag performance. Her research also seeks to explain what happened when it became socially acceptable for women to dance Kuchipudi and even to impersonate male characters as well.

“I’m interested in how gender boundaries or categories are thought about when you find instances of crossing in both cases,” says Kamath. As a practitioner of Kuchipudi, Professor Kamath was excited when she was able to meet the man most famous for performing Satyabhama, a recurring female character in the dance that Professor Kamath says she struggled to perform in her own dance performance.

“I thought she was very interesting because she is known to be very proud of her beauty. It was so interesting to me to see a female character that was arrogant,” recounts Professor Kamath.

Professor Kamath’s interest in the study of gender dates back to her undergraduate years when her honors thesis, which dealt with dance as a means of female empowerment for Hindu women in America, was published in the *Journal of Asian American Studies*. Professor Kamath currently teaches several courses at Middlebury including Gender & Sexuality in South Asian Religions, which focuses on Hinduism and Islam in South Asia and draws upon the theories of Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, and Third World feminists. Another of her classes, Dance & Embodied Knowledge in India, which will be offered in the fall, is a theory practice class including two days of lecture on theories of embodiment and aesthetics in the Indian religious context and one day of training in Indian classical dance.

Professor Kamath says she was drawn to Middlebury for many reasons, a primary one being that the Religion Department approaches the subject of religion with such an open perspective.

“They were really open to thinking of Hinduism in a broader context,” says Professor Kamath. “To be able to teach this dance class, for example, is something that a lot of schools were not really sure about. It’s really experimental.” She notes that Middlebury students must be just as open and receptive as the Department since there are already several names on the waitlist.

When she’s not reading up on the gender theories of Irigaray, Butler, and Freud or the historical texts of South Asian religious traditions, Professor Kamath



loves to read *Go, Dog. Go!* to her one-year-old son Gopal.



Assistant Professor of History of Art and Architecture Erin Sassin has been teaching at Middlebury since September 2012 after receiving her PhD from Brown University.

"I never really realized that history of art and architecture was something you could study as a field until I was an undergrad and took a Renaissance to Modern Art History survey course," says Professor Sassin. "It encapsulated everything I found exciting, basically, why buildings, cities, and the other visual arts look the way that they do – it was everything all in one package."

Professor Sassin was drawn to the history of art and architecture because it felt like a very broad and open field. During her undergraduate years at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, Professor Sassin remembers being told in a more traditional History course that she could not write a paper on the way that women's fashion at the end of the First World War was reflective of the emergence of the "new woman". "I felt that you could do other sorts of projects in Art History as opposed to straight History, at least History as it was being taught in the mid-1900s at Michigan," says Professor Sassin.

Currently, Professor Sassin has two articles coming out in edited volumes. One is on the convergence of housing and empire building on the Eastern Front during World War I; the other is based somewhat on her doctoral work and deals with the relationship of women to public space in Wilhelmine Germany (at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century).

"I think when you're looking at issues of gender or sexuality or ethnicity they're all related to power and that is the thing that's always really interested me," says Professor Sassin, on her interest in women's issues. "My interest in gender and the built environment occurred organically out of a preoccupation with power and its relationship to patriarchy."

As an undergrad, Professor Sassin took a Women's Studies course and, since then, she says it's always been something in the back of her mind. In the Spring of 2014, she will be teaching a First Year Seminar on gender and architecture called "Gender and the Making of Space." Professor Sassin will be on parental leave this fall, but other classes she has taught and/or will teach upon her return include Buildings in Context, the American Home, the Utopian Impulse in Architecture, a course on the city of Berlin, and many others.

"For me, college is a time to become engaged in the world around you, to learn to think critically, and to question the norms that you came to college with. I feel that [Middlebury] is a safe space to really push the boundaries intellectually and socially," says Professor Sassin.

Other than the great work she's doing in the field of the History of Art and Architecture, Professor Sassin is proud of her experience on one of the first women's ice hockey teams in the state of Michigan (where she grew up). She is going to try to get back in the game by joining the local women's team sometime in the near future.

## *GSFS Courses Offered in Fall 2013*

### **GSFS/SOAN 0191 Introduction to Sociology of Gender**

We will look at how the meaning and performance of gender changed over time, from Classical Greece to Victorian England, to the contemporary U.S. 3 hrs. lect. **CMP, SOC** (Laurie Essig) Tuesday and Thursday.

### **GSFS 0200 Foundations in Women's and Gender Studies**

This course provides an introduction to the interdisciplinary field of gender, sexuality, and feminist studies. 3 hrs. lect. **CMP, SOC** (Sujata Moorti) Tuesday and Thursday.

### **GSFS/SOAN 0212 The Family in Contemporary Society**

This course will investigate the social, economic, and political forces that have brought about changes in family life in the beginning of the 21st century. 3 hrs. lect./disc. **CMP, NOR, SOC** (Peggy Nelson) Tuesday and Thursday.

**GSFS/PHIL 0234 Philosophy and Feminism** This course will examine the contributions of various feminists and feminist philosophers to some of the central problems of philosophical methodology, epistemology, philosophy of science, metaphysics, and ethics. **CMP, PHL** (Heidi Grasswick) Tuesday and Thursday.

**GSFS/JAPN 0250 Gender in Japan** In this course we will examine changing ideas about gender and sexuality in Japan in the 10th through 20th centuries, with special attention to the modern period. 3 hr. lect./disc. **AAL, LIT** (Linda White) Tuesday and Thursday.

**GSFS/PSYC 0307 Human Sexuality** This course will provide an introduction to the biological, psychosocial, behavioral, and cultural aspects of human sexuality. (Two psychology courses; not open to first year students; open to Psychology and GSFS majors) 3 hrs. lect. (Susan Baldrige) Tuesday and Thursday.

### **NEW COURSE**

**GSFS/FREN 0368 French Sexual Politics** Reaction to the recent Dominic Strauss-Kahn scandal and deliberations over same-sex marriage are but two illustrations of the important role sex and gender differences continue to play in contemporary French society. In this course we will examine the political responses such phenomena have elicited. (This course will be taught in French; FREN 0230 or by waiver) 3 hrs. lect./disc. **EUR, LNG, SOC** (William Poulin-Deltour) Tuesday and Thursday.

**GSFS/AMST/HIST 0373 History of American Women: 1869-1999** This course will examine women's social, political, cultural, and economic position in American society from 1869 through the late 20th century. 3 hrs. lect./disc. **CMP, HIS, NOR** (Amy Morsman) Monday and Wednesday; 3 discussion sections on Fridays.

**GSFS/IGST/JAPN 0406 The Global Sixties: Exploding Visual Cultures** In this seminar we will explore the global upheavals of 1968 through the transdisciplinary lens of visual culture. This course is equivalent to JAPN 0406 and IGST 0406. 3 hrs. sem. **ART, CMP** (Sujata Moorti, Steven Snyder) (Tuesday and Thursday).

To be added to our mailing list or if you would like a paper copy of this newsletter, send an email to Karin Hanta at [khanta@middlebury.edu](mailto:khanta@middlebury.edu).

Visit our department website at [go/WAGS](http://go/WAGS).

The Chellis House is a white house on Hillcrest Road. It is located behind Proctor, to the left of the Queer Studies House, and diagonal from the Hillcrest Environmental Center. Please feel free to visit!